

LABOR RECRUITMENT POSSIBILITIES AND PROCEDURES
FOR SOUTHERN ILLINOIS^{1/}

By

Reserve
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Manpower for our total war effort promises to be even more difficult to obtain in 1943 than at present. Total unemployment in October 1942 was 1.6 million compared with 3.9 million in October 1941 and 8.8 million in April 1940.

Total nonagricultural employment in October 1942 was 41.9 million compared with 40.9 million in October 1941 and 36.1 million in April 1940. Thus there was an increase of one million in total nonagricultural employment during the past year, and a similar net increase may be in prospect during the next year as we approach more nearly the peak of our war industry production.

The total number of males in the labor force decreased from 40.4 million in October 1941 to 39 million in October 1942, a decrease of 1.4 million which was due chiefly to the induction of men into the armed forces. During the same period, the number of females in the labor force increased from 13.7 million to 15 million. The fact that women are rapidly replacing men in our employment picture is a reflection of the increased tightness of the general labor situation. "Agricultural employment was about one million above the level of a year ago as a result of women and students filling the gaps left by experienced farm workers who shifted to jobs in war industries or entered the armed forces."^{3/}

In view of the labor situation envisaged for 1943, it seems a wise policy to plan the most efficient use of all available manpower. The attainment of announced goals of from nine to 13 million men in the armed forces by the end of 1943 will result in a further heavy drain on manpower. It was to meet this situation that a study was made of the underemployed labor pool in southern Illinois.

Purpose and Objectives of Study

The immediate objectives of this study were (1) to determine whether there were unemployed or underemployed farm workers in southern Illinois, (2) to find out whether such workers were interested in year-round jobs on farms in northern Illinois, (3) to register with the U. S. Employment Service those who were interested in such jobs, and (4) to inform local people of the nature of the study being made and to secure their cooperation in carrying it out.

^{1/} At a meeting on August 18, 1942, the State Subcommittee on Farm Labor recommended that this study be carried out. Plans for the work were completed the following day, and the field work was carried out the following week. The general plan for the work was patterned after a similar cooperative experimental study which was carried on in Wisconsin.

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^{3/} Current Surveys Section, Bureau of the Census, U. S. Department of Commerce, Washington, D. C., September 6, 1942

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The over-all purpose of the study was to determine whether unemployed and underemployed farm workers in the southern part of the state offer a partial solution to the pending farm labor shortage in Illinois. Workers who are so employed that they contribute the most to the war effort should not be moved. Those who are under-employed should be placed in positions where their efforts are needed for full prosecution of the war. The emphasis in this study is on the possibility of moving under-employed persons to areas where they will contribute more to the war effort and where, at the same time, their socio-economic status may be improved.

The study was devised to determine the possibility of recruiting farm labor from the area and not to develop a wholesale recruiting program. If possibilities for such recruiting exist and if moving farm laborers to the north proves practicable, the plan may be followed for future farm labor recruitment and placement.

Method of Conducting the Study

At a conference^{1/} held prior to the time the field work was started, Johnson, Pope, Hamilton, and Fayette Counties were selected as being relatively free from the effect of the demand for labor in mines, oil fields, industrial centers, and ordnance plants and as being suitable areas in southern Illinois for spotchecking the availability of farm workers.^{2/}

Since there was no time to make plans in advance, the first visit to the county was made to arrange a meeting between the persons conducting the study and the local people who were expected to cooperate in the work.^{3/} The purposes of and plans for the work were discussed at that time. After the local people had indicated their approval and desire to cooperate, they were asked to select a township or precinct which offered possibilities for finding farm workers. As one purpose was to determine the availability of farm workers, it was considered advisable to select an area which offered the greatest opportunity for finding underemployed persons; therefore, the community selected for this study cannot be considered representative of the county or area.

The next step, in which the cooperation of local people was essential,^{4/} was to obtain a list of the underemployed persons in the area. The 1940 voting list, although it was neither complete nor entirely up to date, proved to be the most immediately available list of names. It was used to call to the minds of the local representatives the names of inhabitants of the township or precinct whom they considered underemployed.

1/ Present at the conference were H. C. Buchanan; Glen T. Barton; G. H. Reuss, Farm Security Administration; W. D. Buddemeier and P. E. Johnston, of the Department of Agricultural Economics, University of Illinois.

2/ The field work was directed by H. C. Buchanan, Glen T. Barton, and W. D. Buddemeier. Those in charge of this phase of the study feel that it was unfortunate that circumstances made it desirable to begin work on such short notice. It was impossible to make plans or contacts with local persons prior to the visits to the counties. However, the work yielded some significant findings which should be of value in future labor recruitment and placement.

3/ Farm advisers and local representatives of the following agencies were invited to attend the meeting: Farm Security Administration, U. S. Employment Service, Works Projects Administration, Agricultural Adjustment Administration, Forest Service, and other local agencies which might have an interest in the work.

4/ The following local persons proved very helpful in this step: local AAA committeemen, township supervisors, and WPA officials.

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The final step in the field work was to accompany a local man on visits to the underemployed persons. At that time those interested in year-round farm work were registered with the U. S. Employment Service.

Pre-War Labor Conditions

Many areas of southern Illinois normally have a relatively high rate of unemployment and also have large numbers of persons who are underemployed. Although the data obtained in this survey were not complete enough to measure the effectiveness of employment, census data are indicative of the amount of underemployment generally found in those counties in which townships were surveyed.

The employment status of the labor force in the counties in which surveys were made provides a general picture of the amount of unemployment (Table 1).

Table 1.--Employment Status of the Labor Force in Selected Counties,
March 24 to 30, 1940^{a/}

County	Employed ^{b/}		Unemployed ^{c/}		Total		Employed in agriculture	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent ^{d/}
Fayette	9 060	87.3	1 319	12.7	10 379	100	3 408	37.6
Hamilton	4 107	84.2	772	15.8	4 879	100	2 157	52.5
Johnson	2 708	77.4	790	22.6	3 498	100	1 536	56.7
Pope	2 052	70.2	871	29.8	2 923	100	1 225	59.7
Ford	5 264	92.7	415	7.3	5 679	100	2 310	43.9

^{a/} Data taken or calculated from 16th Census of United States, 1940.

^{b/} Except on public emergency work.

^{c/} Number seeking work plus number on public emergency work.

^{d/} Percent of number employed.

Figures for Ford County are included for the purpose of comparison in Table 1. This agricultural county in the better land area of the northern part of the state has been selected in contrast to the counties surveyed, where the land is poorer. In the southern counties the portion of the labor force unemployed varies from 12.7 percent to 29.8 percent in contrast to 7.3 percent in Ford County. The percentage of the labor force employed in agriculture varies from 37.6 percent in Fayette County to 59.7 percent in Pope County, whereas the figure for Ford County is 43.9 percent. Because rather high rates of unemployment and the fact that a large portion of the total labor force is employed in agriculture, it was to be expected that the southern portion of the state would be a potential source of farm workers.

A measure of the amount of unemployment in an area is not also a measure of the ineffectiveness of employment. Many persons in southern Illinois who are considered employed are greatly underemployed. From the standpoint of contributing to the war effort, they could be employed much more effectively elsewhere.

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Table 2.--Underemployment in Agriculture in Selected Counties
in Illinois, 1940^a/

County	Crop Acres	Per person employed in agriculture	
		Value of livestock	Value of implements and machinery
Fayette	54.6	\$595.89	\$353.34
Hamilton	44.5	478.89	201.44
Johnson	32.2	537.59	176.04
Pope	33.2	470.38	180.71
Ford	94.6	709.71	931.51

^a/ Calculated from 16th Census of the United States, 1940.

The productivity per person employed in agriculture in the southern one-third of the state is definitely limited by the lack of land and capital (Table 2). Compared with Ford County, the crop acres, value of livestock, and value of machinery per person employed in this area are extremely small. It is likely that many of these underemployed persons can contribute more to agricultural production by working on a farm where more land and capital are available than by remaining in their present location.

Although employment conditions have changed drastically since 1940, the above data indicate that if farm workers are to be found anywhere in Illinois, the unemployed and the ineffectively employed in the southern counties of the state offer the best potential source of such labor.

Findings and Conclusions

This survey should be considered only as an experiment to determine the advisability of following an intensive recruitment program for farm labor in southern Illinois. The short time available for completing the field work permitted the collection of only a meager amount of statistical data. Furthermore, there was insufficient time for a complete and comprehensive survey. In spite of these handicaps, some very definite conclusions can be drawn concerning the possibilities for farm labor recruitment in this area. Likewise, the experience gained in conducting this survey will serve as a basis for suggestions and recommendations for conducting future recruitment programs.

The findings are shown in Table 3. The reader is cautioned that this is not a representative picture of southern Illinois or even of the counties named. It represents what was found in areas selected for the purpose of finding farm laborers. It also represents conditions only at the time the survey was made. The labor situation changes very rapidly, and therefore entirely different conditions may be found at a later date. Ordnance plant construction and operation, mining, oil-field work, and repair and maintenance work on railroads have absorbed large number of workers. Some of the jobs are temporary and the workers may be released at a later date, but it is to be expected that many of the underemployed will soon find jobs in industry.

From 15 to 33 persons per township were considered underemployed by the local leaders (Table 3). Approximately 45 percent of these persons were contacted by those conducting the survey, and about one-third of them registered with the Employment Service for year-round farm employment. There was, however, an extremely

wide variation in the proportion registering in the different areas, due primarily to local employment conditions and to variations in the completeness of the surveys. An additional 11.3 percent of the total underemployed were interested in farm work although they did not register. Some of them were waiting to hear from other jobs; information about others was secured from another member of the family; and they did not have an opportunity to register.

No particular pressure was exerted on these people to get them to register for farm employment. The wages and working conditions were explained to them, and the importance of maintaining agricultural production as a part of the war effort was discussed. Their registration for employment was entirely voluntary.

Table 3.--Farm Labor Recruitment Data for Five Local Communities
in Southern Illinois, August 24-28, 1942

County	Township or precinct	Number of underemployed ^{a/} persons			
		Total ^{b/}	Contacted	Not contacted	Registered ^{c/}
Johnson	Goreville	24	13	11	2
Pope	Golconda	25	12	13	8
Hamilton	Crook	15	2	13	0
Fayette	N. Hurricane	33	17	16	4
Total		97	44	53	14
					11

a/ "Underemployed" was defined as unemployed or ineffectively employed. In general, persons so classified were those who local leaders considered could improve their economic status by accepting year-round farm employment.

b/ List of names compiled by local leaders from 1940 poll books.

c/ Credentials taken and registered for farm employment with the U. S. Employment Service.

d/ Persons who were interested in the jobs but did not register, usually because they had, or expected to get, other employment. If they do not get other employment, these persons are definitely potential farm workers.

A summarization of the important findings and conclusions follows:

1. In the southern third of the state there is a significant number of workers with some farm experience who are willing to accept year-round jobs on northern farms. This portion of the state offers a means of partially alleviating the pending tight labor situation.
2. In order to recruit workers successfully, it is essential to obtain the cooperation of local people. They can render invaluable aid in locating underemployed persons and in discussing the plan with them.
3. A few men have already accepted jobs on farms farther north.
4. Local people are invariably unaware of the number of underemployed persons in their community until they use some list as a guide in locating them. In each community worked, the first reaction was that there were none or very few; in some instances there was even talk of a labor shortage; however, a check of a list disclosed a very significant number of underemployed persons.

Interest rate	Observation period	Composite coupon	Total	Number of observations	Mean	SD
5	SI	11	11	48	11.111111	0.000000
8	SI	12	12	48	12.000000	0.000000
10	SI	13	13	48	13.000000	0.000000
14	SI	16	16	48	16.000000	0.000000
11	SI	13	13	48	13.000000	0.000000

5. It will be difficult to induce a number of these persons to leave the community in which they are deeply rooted. Two lines of approach may be used: first, convincing them that such a move will improve their own position; and, second, appealing to their patriotism and pointing out that this is their opportunity to further the war effort.
6. The number of workers available at any one time varies inversely with local employment conditions. In Johnson County over 25 percent of those considered underemployed were employed or expected to be employed at ordnance plants or were working temporarily on railroads.
7. The fact that different railroad companies have recruited and moved relatively large numbers of workers out of this part of the state is evidence that labor is available there and can be recruited.
8. The labor situation and opportunities are changing rapidly; in fact, the situation is so dynamic that local people are often unaware of conditions.
9. An effective recruitment program for farm labor will require a great deal of time and work and close cooperation with local people.^{1/}
10. A labor recruitment program in this region will be helpful in locating industrial as well as farm workers.

Recommendations and Suggestions

The task of recruiting farm labor will become increasingly difficult as the rate of induction of men into the armed forces is speeded up and as more men are drawn into industrial employment. From our experiences and findings in conducting this survey, a number of suggestions and recommendations have been prepared which may be of value in solving the farm labor problem in 1943.

Educational Program

1. Farmers and local people. It is recommended that the labor problem be discussed at the winter school district meetings of the Extension Service. The entire farm labor picture, as well as plans for recruitment and placement, should be presented. Farm employers must realize that skilled and experienced farm workers will be scarce and that, as a result, employers will have to pay higher wages. Underemployed rural people must recognize the fact that they can serve the war effort more effectively by accepting full-time employment locally or elsewhere. Every person, both employer and employee, should know what agencies are working on the farm labor recruitment and placement program and how these agencies operate. As the labor problem becomes more critical, every educational and publicity device available should be used in order to keep people informed about it.

2. Local representatives of all organizations concerned with the farm labor problem (farm advisers, AAA committeemen, county war board members, U. S. Employment Service personnel, FSA officials, vocational agriculture instructors, etc.). It is important that these persons keep abreast of the labor problem and the plans for solving it, in order to coordinate rather than to duplicate efforts. Before an extensive recruiting program is started, state representatives of the above-mentioned agencies should send a letter to their local representatives explaining

^{1/} A "Suggested Procedure for Recruiting Farm Labor" is included as an appendix to this report.

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their responsibilities. The attitudes of local leaders may determine whether farmers reduce agricultural production or whether they make a sincere effort to solve the labor problem and maintain production.

3. U. S. Employment Service personnel. As recruiting of farm labor becomes more and more a major problem, the U. S. Employment Service will undoubtedly carry an important part of that work and responsibility. Local farm placement men should be thoroughly acquainted with their responsibilities and the procedure to be followed in carrying them out. It takes time, effort, and careful planning to recruit efficiently and completely all labor in an area. Field supervision and training for persons in charge will make them capable of handling recruitment work without loss of time or duplication of efforts.

Follow-Up Work and Studies

1. Case study of farm placements. The ultimate success of placing southern Illinois workers on northern farms may depend to a considerable extent upon the success of early placements. In the beginning, only a few workers should be moved. After they and the employers have had sufficient time to become acquainted and oriented, both should be interviewed concerning their satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Such information obtained may be of value in future recruitment and placement. The dissatisfaction and return of workers to their home communities may discourage others from accepting similar jobs and may even tend to discourage the cooperation of local leaders in the recruiting program.

2. Labor relations study. A study to determine the reasons for or methods of stabilizing labor may furnish valuable information for an educational program on farm labor. Such a study would involve interviewing employers who have a rapid labor turnover as well as those who have a slow turnover. It would also mean interviewing workers who change jobs frequently, as well as those who have been at the same job a reasonably long time. The information obtained could be used as a guide toward attaining greater labor stability and for suggesting satisfactory wage and labor contracts.

Labor Recruitment and Placement

1. Timing of recruitment and placement is desirable. Farmers will delay hiring men at present wage levels as long as they can possibly finish their work with labor already on the farm. There is little reason for attempting to place farm labor recruits on the farms until the labor shortage is critical enough to exert some pressure on the farmers. When that stage is reached, they will undoubtedly be willing to consider workers who are available. However, many farmers will expect and hope to find men on short notice. The U. S. Employment Service cannot recruit men on such short notice. It must anticipate farm labor needs, and farmers should cooperate by placing orders with the service prior to the time they will need men.

On the other side of the picture, the majority of farm labor recruits are sufficiently interested in employment that they will not refuse other opportunities in favor of farm work. Therefore, it will be a waste of time and effort to recruit large numbers of farm workers too far in advance of the time that farmers are actually ready to hire them.

The Employment Service personnel will be in a position to feel the demand for farm labor as it develops. The experience and knowledge of the various persons and agencies working on the labor problem should make it possible to time properly the recruiting and placing of farm workers.

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2. Additional personnel will be needed. Because of the seasonal character of farm employment, it probably will be necessary to conduct a very intensive farm labor recruitment program next spring. The farm placement personnel of the Employment Service in southern Illinois is inadequate to accomplish the job alone. They will need cooperation from other agencies. It may be advisable for the Employment Service to consider moving some of the employees of the northern offices temporarily to the southern part of the state. Such a plan not only would provide additional manpower for recruiting where it is most needed, but would also utilize the services of persons best acquainted with the farm labor problem.

3. Revised forms are needed. The general forms used by the Employment Service for registering workers and for taking requests for workers are not suitable for use in farm labor recruitment and placement. A concerted effort should be made by the Service to develop and adopt simple forms which provide the essential information.^{1/} Such forms will facilitate recruitment and placement when it must be done on short notice and by persons not familiar with Employment Service forms and procedure.

4. A flexible program should be maintained. The Employment Service has constantly attempted to use local people in filling local jobs. It is highly desirable that this objective be maintained if an intensive recruitment program is undertaken.

5. Continued and increased cooperation between agencies is essential. During the past year the Employment Service and the county war boards have cooperated in working on the farm labor program. The problems faced in 1942 may appear rather insignificant compared with those which may occur in 1943.

Successful execution of the farm labor program in order to maintain agricultural production for the war effort will involve a very broad and comprehensive plan. Such a plan should include educational programs, training of inexperienced workers, labor recruitment, labor placement, and labor relations studies. The problem is likely to be of such magnitude that its successful solution will depend not only upon carefully made plans, but upon the continued and increased cooperation and coordination of all agencies and local persons who have a definite responsibility or interest in securing farm workers.

^{1/} Revised forms were prepared and put into use prior to the completion of this report.

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APPENDIX

Suggested Procedure for Recruiting and Placing Farm Laborers

This report implies that a farm labor recruiting program may need to be carried out on short notice. If so, it is highly important that the job be done completely and efficiently. It may involve the so-called "beating the bushes" procedure to find workers. Plans for doing such a job must be carefully made and followed in order to get desired results. The objective of such a program should be to recruit all labor, industrial as well as farm, in an area in a manner that will prevent duplication of effort. The following suggestions are the outgrowth of the experience acquired in conducting the survey in five communities in southern Illinois.

1. The U. S. Employment Service, a governmental agency organized to recruit and place laborers, should instigate and be responsible, with the cooperation and assistance of other agencies, for carrying out any comprehensive recruitment program for farm labor.

2. The cooperation of all agencies interested in the farm labor problem and represented in the area where recruiting is to be done should be solicited. The following agencies and persons should be considered: farm advisers, AAA committeemen (county and township), WPA director, Forest Service representative, county war boards, Farm Security Administration, and township supervisors.

3. A meeting of all persons interested in the farm labor problem should be held in order to explain and draw up plans for the work.

4. The most complete list of inhabitants which is available should be obtained, to make sure that no one is overlooked. The local representatives who are cooperating should select from the list the names of all persons who are underemployed and who are considered potential workers. The township AAA committeemen and the school district leaders in the extension program are probably best qualified to help with this work. Permanent registration of voters under the new law probably will provide the most complete and up-to-date list of inhabitants in all local areas; however, any list used should be supplemented with the names of additional persons which occur to the local representatives.

5. A local leader should accompany the person who does the recruiting on visits to the underemployed in order to introduce him and to take a major part in the explanation and discussion. The presence and participation of the local leader is a major factor in breaking down resistance to strangers and to new ideas.

6. It will be impossible to contact all persons on the list on the first visit. Since follow-up work will be necessary, it is highly important that the list of names be kept for future reference and to avoid duplication of effort. Notes should be made about each person contacted, and the names of those not contacted should be so marked. The responsibility for further visits and follow-up work may fall upon local leaders. A form similar to the one suggested on the next page will be convenient for keeping a record of the work done and the visits made.

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Farm Labor Recruiting

County _____

Local area _____

Name of person	Address	Date visited	Contacted		Remarks
			Yes	No	

7. In a recruiting program for farm labor, employables who are not interested in farm labor undoubtedly will be discovered. Such persons who are qualified for and interested in industrial employment also should be registered with the Employment Service.

8. All registrations for employment should be turned over to the Employment Service for placement.

9. Before moving registrants for farm labor to northern Illinois, it may be feasible to have a representative of a number of farm employers interview them.

10. Financing the moving of married workers and their families may be a problem. This should be kept in mind during the recruiting program, and workable plans should be devised for accomplishing it.

10. The following table gives the number of cases of smallpox reported up to 1910.